

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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JUSE-00 NSAE-00 CTME-00 SNM-05 TRSE-00 USIA-06

NSC-05 OES-07 OMB-01 AID-05 PM-05 DODE-00 SS-15

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R 141614Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6983

ALL AMCONSULS MEXICO (POUCH)

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 20770

EO 11652:GDS

TAGS: OVIP,MX

SUBJECT: NARCOTICS - ATTORNEY GENERAL'S BREAKFAST FOR
WASHINGTON VISITORS

1. FOLLOWING IS AN UNCLEARED MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WHICH TOOK PLACE AFTER BREAKFAST AT THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE DECEMBER SEVEN AT 08:30. MEXICAN PARTICIPANTS WERE ATTORNEY GENERAL OSCAR FLORES, DEPUTY AG SAMUEL ALBA-LEYVA, EXECUTIVE OFFICER FERNANDO BAEZA-MELENDEZ, AND THE SUPERVISOR OF ZONE COORDINATORS, LIC. CARLOS AGUILAR-GARZA. USG PARTICIPANTS WERE PETER G. BOURNE (SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT), MATHEA FALCO (SENIOR ADVISER TO THE SECRETARY FOR NARCOTICS), RICHARD ARELLANO (DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE, ARA), JOHN O'GRADY (ARA/RPP), RICHARD A. DUGSTAND (S/NM), CESAR P. BERNAL (NARCOTICS ASSISTANCE ATTACHE), JACQUES I. KIERE (NARCOTICS ATTACHE), AND JOSEPH D. MCLAUGHLIN (SPECIAL ASSISTANT).

2. ATTORNEY GENERAL FLORES INITIATED DISCUSSION BY STRESSING NEED FOR MAJOR NARCOTICS PROGRAM IMPACT OVER BRIEF PERIOD INSTEAD OF PROLONGED CAMPAIGN OVER MANY YEARS, WHICH
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HE LIKENED TO USG EXPERIENCE IN VIETNAM. HE SAID IT WAS HARD TO SUSTAIN SUPPORT OVER LONG PERIOD. DR. BOURNE COMMENTED THAT WE HAVE SIMILAR PROBLEM AT HOME. FLORES THEN CONTINUED BY NOTING THAT THE TYPE EFFORT HE HAD IN MIND REQUIRED CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES TO AVOID SLOW ESCALATION WHICH COULD BE COUNTERED STEP-BY-STEP BY NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS.

3. BAEZA RECALLED THE "UNHAPPY EXPERIENCE" OF THE MULTI-SPECTRAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SYSTEM (MOPSS) AND EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR A RELIABLE RECONNAISSANCE SYSTEM. HE NOTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE "BLACK JUNGLE" AREA OF CHIAPAS IS EVEN MORE INACCESSIBLE THAN PARTS OF THE CULIACAN AREA WHERE MOPSS FAILED.

BAEZA OPINED THAT WITH A RELIABLE RECONNAISSANCE SYSTEM AND WITH SOME SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT IN POPPY AND MARIHUANA PRODUCTION AREAS, IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO END MOST ILLICIT CULTIVATION WITHIN APPROXIMATELY THREE YEARS.

4. BAEZA STATED THAT A "SUFFICIENT AND PROPORTIONATE" EFFORT WAS NEEDED AGAINST NARCOTICS PRODUCTION, OTHERWISE IT WOULD BE BETTER TO LET SUPPLY AND DEMAND ALONE. AT THIS POINT FLORES INJECTED HIS OPINION THAT IF THE GOM CEASED ALL ERADICATION EFFORTS IMMEDIATELY, THE NUMBER OF ILLICIT FIELDS WOULD ACTUALLY DECLINE SINCE HE BELIEVES TRAFFICKING GROUPS ARE DELIBERATELY OVERPLANTING IN AN ATTEMPT TO SALVAGE SUFFICIENT OPIUM TO MEET DEMAND. BAEZA CONTINUED BY CITING THE INCREDIBLE COST OF THE PROGRAM FOR GENERATIONS IF THE PRESENT LEVEL OF EFFORT IS CONTINUED, NOTING THAT THE GOM CAN ILL AFFORD TO DEVOTE SUCH RESOURCES TO NARCOTICS CONTROL. HE ADDED THAT IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS OVER 4,000 MEXICANS HAD BEEN JAILED FOR NARCOTICS RELATED OFFENSES, MEANING THAT 4,000 FAMILIES HAVE NO ONE TO SUS-
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TAIN THEM, WHICH CAUSES A MAJOR SOCIAL PROBLEM.

5. THE ABOVE CONSIDERATIONS, BAEZA STATED, PROMPTED FLORES TO ORDER THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL PLAN WHICH WOULD TRANSFER TO ALL PRODUCTION AREAS THE TECHNIQUES SO SUCCESSFULLY USED IN THE CULIACAN AREA. THIS WOULD REQUIRE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO ESTABLISH CONTROL BASES, BUILD FORWARD BASES, INCREASE PERSONNEL, ETC. THE PRIORITIES, HE SAID, WERE: (1) TO DETECT ILLICIT CROPS; (2) TO DESTROY THEM; AND (3) TO PROVIDE TRANSPORT TO THE MILITARY. HOWEVER, THE THIRD PRIORITY FREQUENTLY SUPERCEDED THE SECOND SINCE IT WAS OFTEN ESSENTIAL TO POSITION MILITARY FORCES IN THE ERADICATION AREA TO AVOID GROUND FIRE DIRECTED AT SPRAY HELICOPTERS. HE SAID THAT NEITHER HE NOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL WAS SATISFIED THAT VERIFICATION OF DESTRUCTION WAS ADEQUATELY MET. FOR EXAMPLE, HE SAID, THE EMBASSY HAD REQUESTED THAT FOUR BELL 206 HELICOPTERS BE ASSIGNED FULL TIME TO THE VERIFICATION FUNCTION. BAEZA SAID THAT THIS HAD PROVED IMPOSSIBLE AND THAT VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS WERE MET BY AIRCRAFT USED FOR OTHER FUNCTIONS AS WELL.

6. MOVING TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS, BAEZA SAID CAPABILITIES IN THE CULIACAN AREA WERE EXCELLENT AND THAT MINOR IMPROVEMENT FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL FORCES ELSEWHERE WAS NEEDED. HE SAID THERE WAS A MAJOR REQUIREMENT TO IMPROVE THE COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITY OF MILITARY TASK FORCES WORKING ON NARCOTICS AND STRESSED THAT COMMUNICATIONS PROVIDED ECONOMIES IN OTHER AREAS SINCE FEWER TROOPS COULD COVER MORE GROUND IF THEY HAD ADEQUATE COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITY TO COORDINATE THEIR EFFORTS.

7. BAEZA SAID THAT IT WAS MUCH CHEAPER TO USE GROUND TRANSPORT WHEREVER POSSIBLE TO SUPPORT THE MILITARY TASK FORCES,

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BUT THAT THIS ITSELF WOULD REQUIRE SIZEABLE EXPENDITURES TO RENOVATE AND MAINTAIN SEIZED VEHICLES. HE CITED THE EXAMPLE OF CULIACAN, WHERE 50 SEIZED VEHICLES (PRIMARILY HEAVY TRUCKS AND PICKUPS) WERE MODIFIED TO SERVE AS FUEL AND WATER TANKERS, SUPPLY VEHICLES AND TROOP TRANSPORTS.

8. THE INCREASED DEPLOYMENT OF FORCES UPON WHICH THE NEW PLAN IS BASED WILL ALSO REQUIRE SHELTERS AND STORAGE FACILITIES IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS. BAEZA BELIEVES THAT ANY BUILDINGS ACQUIRED FOR THIS PURPOSE SHOULD BE OF A TYPE WHICH CAN BE DISMANTLED FOR TRANSPORT TO NEW LOCATIONS AS THE SITUATION DICTATES.

9. BAEZA AT THIS POINT PRESENTED THE GROUP WITH SUMMARY COPIES OF THE NEW NATIONAL PLAN, NOTING THAT DETAILED COPIES HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE EMBASSY FOR ANALYSIS. HE CONCLUDED WITH THE PHRASE (LEARNED FROM THE EMBASSY), THE "BALL IS IN YOUR COURT".

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10. DR. BOURNE SAID THAT HE SHARED THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S AND BAEZA'S ENTHUSIASM FOR ESTABLISHING A SPECIFIC TIME-FRAME, SUCH AS THREE YEARS, AND THE CONCEPT OF USING A MAJOR FORCE. HE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THE EFFECTIVENESS IN THE CULIACAN AREA OF CONCENTRATING RESOURCES. BOURNE SAID THE USG WOULD EXAMINE THE PLAN AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE AND THAT WE WOULD PLACE A HIGH PRIORITY ON THE DETECTION OF ILLICIT CROPS AND THE VERIFICATION OF THEIR DESTRUCTION. HE NOTED THAT IF THE GOM DOES NOT LOCATE ALL ILLICIT CROPS IT CANNOT KNOW HOW CONFIDENT TO BE THAT AN ADEQUATE PERCENTAGE IS BEING DESTROYED. HE ADDED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO DETERMINE DURING THE REVIEW THE PROPER BALANCE BETWEEN NEW RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS AND BETTER MANAGEMENT OF EXISTING RESOURCES.

11. AG FLORES SAID HIS STAFF IS DOING THE BEST IT CAN WITH WHAT IT HAS. HE STRESSED THAT EMBASSY OFFICERS PARTICIPATED IN THE FIELD SURVEYS THAT LED TO THE NATIONAL PLAN, AND THAT IT WAS TRULY A JOINT PLAN TO MEET A COMMON PROBLEM.

12. MS. FALCO NOTED THAT DETECTION AND VERIFICATION WERE OF GREAT CONCERN, PARTICULARLY WHEN LOOKING AT THE PERIOD THREE YEARS HENCE WHEN OPERATIONS MAY BE PHASED DOWN. SHE STRESSED THE NEED FOR THE USG AND THE GOM TO WORK TOGETHER IN DEVELOPING SENSING SYSTEM TO ASSURE THAT THE SYSTEM IS ADEQUATELY RESPONSIVE TO MEXICAN NEEDS. AG FLORES ASSURED HER OF COMPLETE GOM COOPERATION IN THIS ENDEAVOR. HE SAID THAT THE PRESENT SYSTEM, VISUAL RECONNAISSANCE, IS ITSELF EFFECTIVE, BUT THAT IT IS SLOW AND EXTREMELY EXPENSIVE.

13. MR. ARELLANO EXPRESSED THE THANKS OF THOSE FROM WASHINGTON FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT THE ERADICATION

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AREA IN CULIACAN AND SEE FIRST HAND THE OPERATION THERE. NOTING THAT ONE LOOK WAS WORTH 10,000 WORDS IN TELEGRAMS FROM THE EMBASSY, HE SAID THAT DURING THE VISIT ONE COULD

FEEL THE COOPERATION BETWEEN MEXICANS AND AMERICANS WORK-
ING ON THE SAME PROGRAM. FLORES SMILED AND CONCLUDED THE
MEETING BY SAYING "THE AMERICANS HERE IN YOUR EMBASSY
SUFFER WITH US."

14. NOTE: IN A PRIVATE CHAT WHILE BREAKFAST WAS BEING
SERVED, FLORES, FALCO AND KIERE DISCUSSED DEA'S HEROIN
SIGNATURE PROGRAM AND THE NEED FOR CONTROLLED OPIUM SAMPLES
FROM MEXICO. FLORES AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO PROVIDE SAMPLES
BUT NOTED THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO GET SAMPLES EACH
YEAR FROM THE SAME FIELD (AS REQUESTED BY DEA) SINCE
FARMERS OFTEN MOVE THEIR CROP IN AN EFFORT TO AVOID DE-
TECTION. AT FALCO'S SUGGESTION, KIERE AGREED TO DISCUSS
THE PRECISE NEEDS OF THE PROGRAM DURING HIS VISIT TO DEA
HEADQUARTERS DECEMBER 12 AND THEN WORK OUT COLLECTION
METHODS WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE ON HIS RETURN.
LUCEY

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